

and in those cases patients must have adequate protections. Furthermore, this bill applies not only to HMOs, but also to hospitals, nursing homes, and long term care providers.

Senator GRASSLEY and I have worked diligently to craft a fair bankruptcy bill that addresses the true problems of the bankruptcy system. We believe that the increasing frequency of health care bankruptcy and the problems it creates for patients is a serious problem that deserves to be addressed in our bankruptcy reform effort.

Our bill would create several important patient protections. It would provide for the appointment of an ombudsman to monitor and assure continued quality of the care being provided to patients. The bill would set up procedures to ensure that the confidentiality of patient records is strictly maintained as a health care provider closes its operation.

Our legislation would also raise the priority in bankruptcy of the costs associated with closing a health care business. Those costs are often incurred by state agencies, and thus the taxpayers. Finally, the bill would require a bankruptcy trustee to use best efforts to transfer patients to alternative providers when a health care business fails.

The reality of today's health care system is that there will inevitably be providers who fall upon financial difficulties and seek the protection of the bankruptcy system. Given that reality, we must take the steps today to ensure that the patients of these providers have adequate protections.●

BILL MCSWEENEY

● Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, since coming to Washington, Marcelle and I have had an opportunity to meet very special people who have become special friends. Among those are Bill and Dorothy McSweeney.

A great regret I had was having to miss Bill's surprise 70th birthday party recently, but it showed the genius of Dorothy that she was able to keep it a secret. That so many turned out shows a great respect for this multi-faceted man—people across the political spectrum and including some of the best representatives of arts and entertainment. It definitely reflected all of his background.

I would ask unanimous consent that an article in Monday, March 15th Washington Post be included in the RECORD at this point.

There being no objection, the article was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Washington Post, Mar. 15, 1999]

A FULL-BLOWN SURPRISE FOR BILL MCSWEENEY'S BIRTHDAY, 70 CANDLES AND 200 FRIENDS

(By Roxanne Roberts)

Some men think birthdays are depressing. Some think getting older is preferable to the alternative, but nonetheless annoying. Then there are the few, the happy few, who think

each birthday is a passport to wonderful new opportunities.

"The great thing about being 70 is that you get to kiss all the beautiful ladies," said Bill McSweeney with only a slightly wicked grin. "When you're 70, you don't look dangerous. Little do they know."

The local businessman, arts advocate and community leader was the guest of honor at a surprise party Friday night at Ford's Theatre. What started out as a small gathering for family ballooned into a celebration with more than 200 friends and longtime fans. Everyone was sworn to not drop a single, solitary hint—and judging by the look at McSweeney's face when he walked into the theater, they succeeded.

"Who said people couldn't keep secrets in Washington?" said his wife, Dorothy.

This was no small feat, considering the guest list included the likes of Mayor Anthony Williams, former mayor Marion Barry, Education Secretary Richard Riley, Dorothy Height, Veterans Affairs Secretary Togo West, comedian Mark Russell, WJLA anchor Paul Berry, talk show host Diane Rehm, NASA administrator Dan Goldin, media moguls Arnaud de Borchgrave and Phil Merrill, and former FBI director Bill Sessions. The crowd was full of prominent Washingtonians—LaSalle Leffall, John Hechinger, Esther Coopersmith, Marshall Coyne, Peggy Cafritz and Frankie Hewitt, to name a few—a testament to McSweeney's lifelong involvement with his adopted home town.

"I met him more than 40 years ago and we've been friends ever since," said Height, the president emerita of the National Council of Negro Women. "He's so genuine. And in addition to everything else, he's lots of fun."

"When you think about people who have done something for the community, you think about Bill," said Leffall. "He's always been there."

McSweeney, former president of Occidental International, has spent most of his life trying to make Washington a better place to live. He was crucial in reopening Ford's Theatre and has served on the boards of the Kennedy Center, Folger Shakespeare Theatre and Helen Hayes Awards. He's been a longtime advocate for the D.C. schools, housing and inner-city youth, and a key fundraiser for the Lombardi Cancer Center and other charities.

"Bill is a real inspiration for this city," Williams said. "I think he's a real role model for every American citizen to contribute to Washington, D.C."

"I think Bill McSweeney is one of God's special people on Earth," said Cora Masters Barry.

They like him. They really, really like him. So his wife and friends wanted to do something special for his 70th birthday this month.

Problem was that the birthday boy already had decided how he was going to celebrate. McSweeney made a deal with his wife to bring their four children and grandchildren down to Mexico for two weeks. The official birthday is March 31, and he planned to scuba-dive and have a nice, low-key party on the beach.

So, naturally, his wife of more than three decades decided that a huge bash was exactly what he needed.

Dorothy McSweeney proceeded to issue invitations, juggle a thousand details, lie sweetly when her husband walked in on telephone conversations and lure her unsuspecting spouse to the theater with the help of pals Leon and Lynn Fuerth. It was natural to go to Ford's, where McSweeney—a longtime member of the board—thought he was going to see "Eleanor: An American Love Story," a musical based on the marriage of Eleanor and Franklin Roosevelt.

The hardest part for the guests was remembering not to blurt out something stupid in advance: "When you see someone an awful lot, it's hard not to let the cat out of the bag," said Victor Shargai, who serves with McSweeney at the Kennedy Center and Hayes awards.

The surprise worked, it seems, because the party took place two weeks before his actual birth date. McSweeney walked in, did a double take and slapped hand to forehead as his friends sang a ragged rendition of "Happy Birthday." There was much hugging and kissing. Everyone looked terribly pleased, probably because the surprise was not on them.

"I love surprise parties—for others," said Leon Fuerth.

"I want to choose the people who come to my birthday party," said Diane Rehm.

"It's about control," Rehm's husband, John, said knowingly.

Luckily, McSweeney is one of those rare creatures who like surprise parties. "I think it's the most wonderful way of all," he said. "You don't have to worry about anything. It's a very emotional thing to walk in and see all your friends."

In this case, he also got to see "Eleanor"—any resemblance to the current first lady is strictly coincidental: Then the party moved downstairs to the Lincoln Museum, where there were more hugs and kisses, a telegram from Vice President Gore, a medal from the VA's West and a presentation and testimonial by NASA's Goldin.

"He helps people," Goldin said of McSweeney. "In addition to knowing people, he helps people."

The menu consisted of McSweeney's favorite foods: hot dogs, Boston baked beans, corn pudding and Black Forest cake. McSweeney was having such a good time he kept inviting everybody to his 100th birthday party.

No wonder they like him: This is an optimist, count-your-blessings, look-to-the-future kind of guy. "Hey, Bill!" shouted Mark Russell. "Seven more years and you'll be old enough to be an astronaut!"

Meanwhile, there are plenty of ladies to kiss.●

RHODE ISLAND RESERVE OFFICERS ASSOCIATION 75TH ANNIVERSARY

● Mr. REED. Mr. President, I rise to congratulate the Rhode Island Department of the Reserve Officers Association of the United States (RIROA) on the 75th Anniversary of its founding.

The Reserve Officers Association was established in 1922 to link together Reserves from each of the armed services. The fighting force of the 21st century is a joint force, yet Rhode Island's Reserves implemented this concept 75 years ago when the Army, Navy Reserve, and National Guard joined together to form the RIROA.

The purpose of the Reserve Officers Association is to support a military policy for the United States that will provide, promote, and develop the execution of adequate national security. The RIROA has dedicated itself to this purpose and to bringing all military services closer in a common bond. The RIROA is a leading proponent of developing strong Reserve forces in each of the uniformed services to work for the welfare of citizen soldiers in Rhode Island and the interests of the national security of the entire country.